NUMB. XXIX.

The GUARDIAN.

Ride si sapis—— Mart.

Tuesday, April 14. 1713.

IN order to look into any Person's Temper, I generally make my first Observation upon his Laugh, whether he is easily moved, and what are the Passages which throw him into that agreeable kind of Convulsion. People are never so much unguarded as when they are pleased; and Laughter being a visible Symptom of some inward Satisfaction, 'tis then, if ever, we may believe the Face. There is, perhaps, no better Index to point us to the Particularities of the Mind than this, which is in it self one of the chief Distinctions of our Rationality. For, as *Milton* says,

—— Smiles from Reason flow, to Brutes deny'd,
And are of Love the Food——

It may be remarked in general under this Head that the Laugh of Men of Wit is for the most part but a faint constrained kind of Half-Laugh, as such Persons are never without some Diffidence about them; but that of Fools is the most honest, natural, open Laugh in the World.

I have often had Thoughts of writing a Treatise upon this Faculty, wherein I would have laid down Rules for the better Regulation of it at the Theatre. I would have criticised on the Laughs now in vogue, by which our Comic Writers might the better know how to transport an Audience into this pleasing Affection. I had set apart a Chapter for a Dissertation on the Talents of some of our Modern Comedians; and as it was the Manner of *Plutarch* to draw Comparisons of his Heroes and Orators, to set their Actions and Eloquence in a fairer Light; so I would have made the Parallel of *Pinkethman*, *Norris* and *Bullock*; and so far shown their different Methods of raising Mirth, that any one should be able to distinguish whether the Jest was the Poet's or the Actor's.

As the Play-house affords us the most Occasions of observing upon the Behaviour of the Face, it may be useful (for the Direction of those who would be Criticks this way) to remark, that the Virgin Ladies usually dispose themselves in the Front of the Boxes, the young married Women compose the second Row, while the Rear is generally made up of Mothers of long standing, undesigning Maids and contented Widows. Whoever will cast his Eye upon them under this View, during the Representation of a Play, will find me so far in the right, that a *Double Entendre* strikes the first Row into an affected Gravity or careless Indolence, the second will venture at a Smile, but the third take the Conceit entirely, and express their Mirth in a downright Laugh.

When I descend to Particulars, I find the reserved Prude will relapse into a Smile at the extravagant Freedoms of the Coquet, the Coquet in her turn laughs at the Starchness and awkward Affectation of the Prude, the Man of Letters is tickled with the Vanity and Ignorance of the Fop, and the Fop confesses his Ridicule at the Unpoliteness of the Pedant.

I fancy we may range the several Kinds of Laughers under the following Heads.

The *Dimplers*,
The *Smilers*,
The *Laughers*,
The *Grinners*,
The *Horse-Laughers*.

The *Dimple* is practised to give a Grace to the Features, and is frequently made a Bait to entangle a gazing Lover; this was called by the Ancients the *Chian* Laugh.

The *Smile* is for the most part confined to the Fair Sex, and their Male Retinue. It expresses our Satisfaction in a silent sort of Approbation, doth not too much disorder the Features, and is practised by Lovers of the most delicate Address. This tender Motion of the Physiognomy the Ancients called the *Ionic* Laugh.

The *Laugh* among us is the common *Risus* of the Ancients.

The *Grin* by Writers of Antiquity is called the *Syncrusian*; and was then, as 'tis at this time, made use of to display a beautiful Set of Teeth.

The *Horse-Laugh*, or the *Sardonic*, is made use of with great Success in all kinds of Disputation. The Proficients in this Kind, by a well-timed Laugh, will baffle the most solid Argument. This upon all Occasions supplies the want of Reason, is always received with great Applause in Coffee-house Disputes, and that Side the Laugh joins with is generally observed to gain the better of his Antagonist.

The Prude hath a wonderful Esteem for the *Chian* Laugh or Dimple; she looks upon all the other kinds of Laughter as Excesses of Levity; and is never seen upon the most extravagant Jests to disorder her Countenance with the Ruffle of a Smile. Her Lips are composed with a Primness peculiar to her Character,

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racter, all her Modesty seems collected into her Face, and she but very rarely takes the Freedom to sink her Cheek into a Dimple.

The young Widow is only a *Clean* for times; her Smiles are confined by Decorum, and she is obliged to make her Face sympathize with her Habit; she looks demure by Art, and by the strict Rules of Decency is never allowed the Smile till the first Offer or Advance towards her is over.

The Effeminate Fop, who by the long Exercise of his Countenance at the Glass hath reduced it to an exact Discipline, may claim a Place in this Class. You see him upon any Occasion, to give Spirit to his Discourse, admire his own Eloquence by a Dimple.

The *Ionics* are those Ladies that take a greater Liberty with their Features, yet even these may be said to smother a Laugh, as the former to stifle a Smile.

The Beau is an *Ionic* out of Complaisance, and practises the Smile the better to sympathize with the Fair. He will sometimes join in a *Laugh* to humour the Spleen of a Lady, or applaud a piece of Wit of his own, but always takes care to confine his Mouth within the Rules of Good-breeding; he takes the Laugh from the Ladies, but is never guilty of so great an Indecorum as to begin it.

The *Ionic* Laugh is of universal Use to Men of Power at their Levees; and is esteemed by judicious Place-Hunters a more particular Mark of distinction than the Whisper. A young Gentleman of my Acquaintance valued himself upon his Success, having obtained this favour after the attendance of three Months only.

A judicious Author some Years since Published a Collection of Sonnets, which he very successfully called *Laugh and be fat*, or *Pills to Purge Melancholy*; I cannot sufficiently admire the facetious Title of these Volumes, and must censure the World of Ingratitude, while they are so negligent in rewarding the Jocose Labours of my Friend Mr. *D'Urfey*, who was so large a Contributor to this Treatise, and to whose humorous Productions so many Rural Squires in the remotest parts of this Island are obliged for the Dignity and State which Corpulency gives them. The Story of the Sick Man's breaking an Imposthume by a sudden Fit of Laughter, is too well known to need a recital. It is my Opinion, that the above Pills would be extreamly proper to be taken with *Asses Milk*, and mightily contribute towards the renewing and restoring decayed Lungs. *Democritus* is generally represented to us as a Man of the largest Size, which we may attribute to his so frequent Exercise of his risible Faculty. I remember *Juvenal* somewhere says of him.

Perpetuo risu pulmonem agitare solebat.

That sort of Man whom a late Writer has called the *Butt* is a great Promoter of this healthful Agitation, and is generally stocked with so much good Humour, as to strike in with the Gaiety of Conversation, though some ingenuous Blunder of his own be the subject of the Raillery.

I shall range all old amorous Dotards under the denomination of *Grinners*; when a young blooming Wench touches their Fancy, by an endeavour to recal Youth into their Cheeks, they immediately overstrain their Muscular Features, and shrivel their Countenance into this frightful Merriment.

The Wag is of the same kind, and by the same Artifice labours to support his Impotence of Wit; but he very frequently calls in the *Horse-laugh* to his Assistance.

There are another kind of *Grinners* which the Ancients call *Megarics*, and some Moderns have, not injudiciously, given them the Name of the *Sneerers*. These always indulge their Mirth at the Expence of their Friends, and all their Ridicule consists in unseasonable Ill-nature. I could wish these Laughers would consider, that let them do what they can, there is no laughing away their own Follies by laughing at other People's.

The Mirth of the Tea Table is for the most part *Megaric*, and in Visits the Ladies themselves very seldom scruple the sacrificing a Friendship to a Laugh of this Denomination.

The Coquet hath a great deal of the *Megaric* in her; but, in short, she is a proficient in Laughter, and can run through the whole exercise of the Features; she subdues the formal Lover with the *Dimple*, accosts the Fop with the *Smile*, joins with the Wit in the downright *Laugh*, to vary the Air of her Countenance frequently rallies with the *Grin*; and when she hath ridiculed her Lover quite out of his Understanding, to compleat his Misfortunes strikes him dumb with the *Horse-laugh*.

The Horse-laugh is a distinguishing Characteristick of the Rural Hoyden, and is observed to be the last Symptom of Rusticity that forsakes her under the Discipline of the Boarding-School.

Punsters, I find, very much contribute towards the *Sardonic*, and the extreams of either Wit or Folly seldom fail of raising this noble kind of Applause. As the Ancient Physicians held the *Sardonic* Laugh very beneficial to the Lungs; I should, methinks, advise all my Countrymen of Consumptive and Hectical Constitutions to associate with the most facetious Punsters of the Age. *Persius* hath very elegantly described a *Sardonic* Laugher in the following Line,

Ingeminat tremulos Naso crispante cachinnos.

Laughter is a Vent of any sudden Joy that strikes upon the Mind, which being too volatile and strong, breaks out in this Tremor of the Voice. The Poets make use of this Metaphor when they would describe Nature in her richest Dress, for Beauty is never so lovely as when adorned with the Smile; and Conversation never sets easier upon us, than when we now and then discharge our selves in a Symphony of Laughter, which may not improperly be called *The Chorus of Conversation*.

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